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THE INSECT PEST SITUATION

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U. S. Department of Agriculture

A radio talk by M. P. Jones, Bureau of Entomology, delivered in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, Wednesday, April 12, 1933, and broadcast by a network of 49 associate NBC radio stations.

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SALISBURY:

With the approach of the crop season, which means also the season when the pestiferous insects contribute their bit to the confusion of farmers and gardeners, we are resuming the monthly reports on the abundance of insects affecting different crops in different parts of the country. These reports are gathered by the Federal Bureau of Entomology through its Insect Pest Survey. State and Federal entomologists in all parts of the country sent in the information for their localities.

I am pleased to present to you one of the extension entomologists of the United States Department of Agriculture, Mr. M. P. Jones.

JONES:

I am glad to make the acquaintance of all you Farm and Home Hour listeners. I am glad also that Salisbury emphasized to you the fact that we come before the microphone each month of the growing season to make a report to you on the relative numbers of insects threatening different crops in different parts of the United States east of the Rocky Mountains. It is estimated that insects destroy about two billion dollars worth of crops annually. We shall not try to send you information on control of the various insects. The place for you to obtain that information is at the office of your county agricultural agent or at your State Agricultural college.

Now, with that understanding, let me give you some brief reports on the insect pest situation in late March. These reports come from State and Federal entomologists in the different sections of the country.

These men, by the latter part of March, were able to give us definite information about the prevalence in some section this year, of three insects affecting grain crops -- the Army cutworm, the white grub, and the Hessian fly. Entomologists in Kansas and Oklahoma have received reports from farmers that the Army cutworm is causing damage to wheat and oats in central and southern Kansas and the entire northwestern part of Oklahoma.

Reports from Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, and Wisconsin, state that there are considerable numbers of white grubs in the fields and meadows this year. The Illinois State entomologist, late in March, wrote that apparently nearly one-fourth of the fields in northern Illinois showed a white grub population big enough to cause damage to corn during the summer of 1933.

Wheat growers in three Middle Western States who failed to observe the fly-free date for sowing wheat last fall are paying the price in infestation of Hessian fly this spring, according to the reports. One affected section is Central Missouri. Another is South Central Nebraska. Another is Western

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Illinois. To show the importance of observing the fly-free sowing date for winter wheat, I might quote from an official Illinois report the following:

"Ninety per cent of the wheat was seeded after the safe-sowing date in western Illinois last fall. During the winter that wheat has been found to contain 3.2 per cent infestation. But the 10 per cent of winter wheat seeded before the safe-sowing date is found to have 36 per cent infestation."

If you want to draw a moral from this report, it is that you wheat growers who are located in districts where Hessian fly infestation threatens next fall will find that it pays to delay sowing until after the date that your county agent or State college entomologist gives as the safe one for your locality.

Well, we have time for some brief reports on the abundance of the insects affecting fruits. All apple growers of course want to know about the size of the codling moth population. In the East Central State it is reported that as high as 50 per cent of the codling moths were killed during the winter. The entomologist say that this death rate is probably due to the severe cold waves of January and February.

You Southern peach growers will be interested to learn that the Oriental fruit moth began to emerge last month from its winter quarters in Georgia and South Carolina. So far, we've had no reports from the States farther north that the fruit moth had appeared on the scene.

The plum curculio started leaving hibernation in numbers during the last week in March, according to reports from a representative of the Bureau of Entomology at Fort Valley, Georgia, in which he says that the curculio has appeared in peach orchards this year well in advance of the time when growers put on the petal-fall spray. This means that peach growers who apply the petal-fall spray will be able to kill off large numbers of the curculio.

Just one more report on fruit insects. This comes from Florida. The reports from two different observers there say that the green citrus aphid has done considerable damage to oranges, but that the damage is not so severe as in previous outbreaks.

Well, that concludes the report of the main items of interest in the March Survey of Insect Pest conditions over the country. I'll give you some more facts about insect population early next month. Meanwhile, let me suggest that if you have any problem of insect control, you take it up with your country agricultural agent or the entomologists within your State or with the United States Bureau of Entomology.